

ARTICLE APPEARED
ON PAGE 19A

12 December 1986

Casey faces determined Senate panel

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WASHINGTON — When CIA Director William J. Casey appears before the Senate Intelligence Committee Tuesday, he will face a panel that has fought bitterly with him for six years over his candor and responsiveness — and has always felt that it lost.

This time, several sources said, Casey's future in office may depend on how completely he answers questions about the Iran arms deal and the diversion of a reported \$10 million to \$30 million in profits to the Nicaraguan rebels.

If Casey, 73, does not come clean, several sources said, some of the most influential members of the committee will publicly call for President Reagan to fire him.

"The committee has its ducks in a row," said a top aide to one member. "He'd better say what he knows."

On Nov. 21, Casey appeared before the intelligence committees of both the House and the Senate — although he was not under oath. He answered questions about the administration's decision to sell arms to Iran — but said nothing about the diversion of any money to the rebels, called contras.

Meese uncorrected

Nor did Casey, the White House, or any CIA spokesman ever correct the assertion made Nov. 25 by Attorney General Edwin Meese 3d that Casey did not know of the money to the contras until he was told by Meese.

But Casey told the House Foreign Affairs Committee on Wednesday that he first heard "rumors" of a contra diversion in early October — and that a longtime friend, New York businessman Roy M. Furmark, called him in mid-October and told him that he believed money was being diverted to aid the Nicaraguan rebels.

"We want to know why he didn't mention that to us," said one Senate Intelligence Committee source. "He will face some awful tough questions. And we will be asking questions on the basis of considerably

more testimony and knowledge that the House Foreign Affairs Committee had. That committee took testimony from only four witnesses, all in public, two of whom invoked the Fifth Amendment."

By contrast, the Senate panel has held lengthy hearings over the last two weeks, all behind closed doors. Its witness list has included Furmark — who testified for nearly 3½ hours yesterday — as well as several former and present CIA officials.

What's more, according to one committee source, Casey's testimony about Furmark came as no surprise to the committee members.

"Knew all of it"

"We knew the Furmark thing," said the source. "We knew all of it; in fact, we knew more than he testified to."

As a consequence, the Senate Intelligence Committee members are apparently the very few people in Washington, in or out of government, who have any informed feel for the murky Iran-contras scandal.

Sen. William S. Cohen (R., Maine), himself a writer of spy novels, said yesterday:

"Each day that passes, each witness that comes before the committee, the picture becomes clearer, the story more confounding."

But, Cohen added, "The committee does not have sufficient evidence to [reach] a conclusion as to where the money went, to whom, under what circumstances and how much."

Two of the men who are said to know — fired National Security Council aide Oliver L. North, who allegedly engineered the diversion scheme, and former national security adviser John M. Poindexter, who knew "generally" of it — took the Fifth Amendment before the committee.

As a result, Casey's testimony could be critical: Committee members believe that Casey can tell them not only about the CIA's role in the administration's policy of selling arms to Iran but also much more about how much money went to the contras — and how — than the committee now knows.

Members of Congress have complained in the past that Casey has been less than forthcoming. Rep. Norman Y. Mineta (D., Calif.) once said, "Bill Casey wouldn't tell you if your coat was on fire while you were wearing it."

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